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STRANGE AND UNBELIEVABLE!

MAY 1954

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AND

JOURNEY FEAR



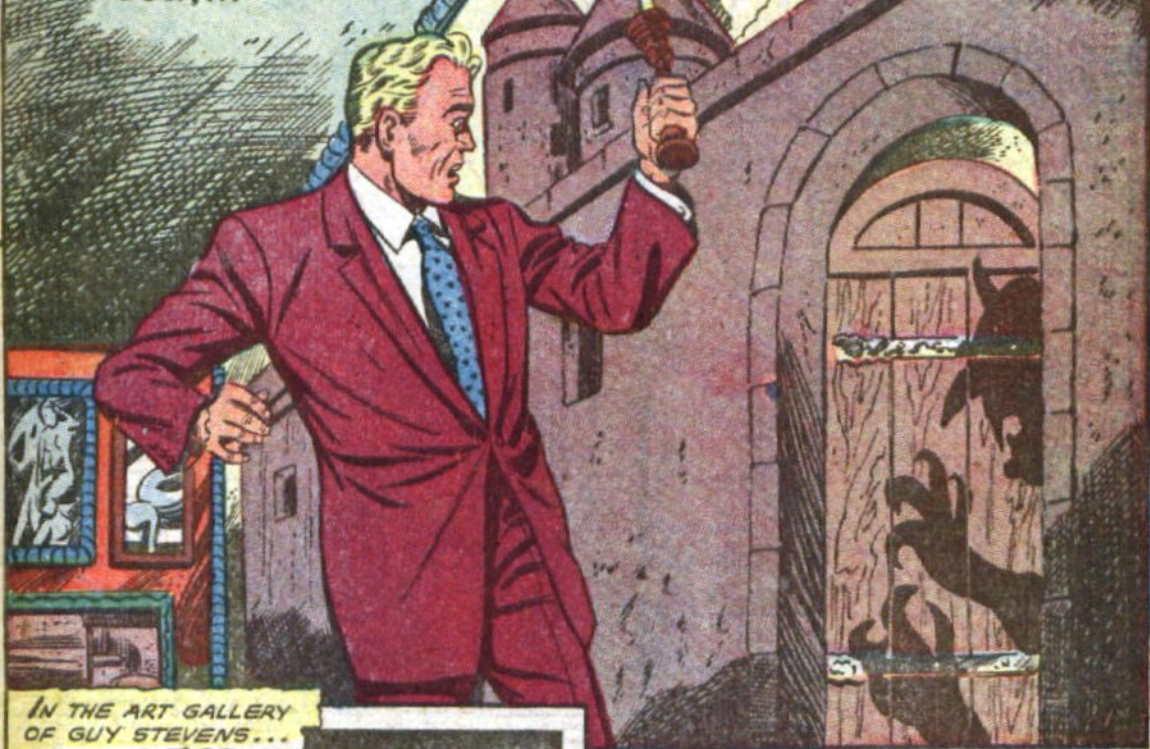
This Body is Mine!
Assignment Horror
The FLAT Man
Doorway to Death



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DOORWAY to DEATH

IT HAD BEEN PAINTED CENTURIES AGO BY AN EVIL MAN, WITH A BRUSH DIPPED IN BLOOD! NOW IT WAS IN NEW YORK, THE PROPERTY OF AN ECCENTRIC ART DEALER! WHY DID HE PRIZE IT SO HIGHLY? WAS IT BECAUSE OF THE MYSTERIOUS WORLD THAT LAY BEYOND THE BECKONING DOOR...



IN THE ART GALLERY OF GUY STEVENS...

QUITE A FEATHER IN YOUR CAP, GUY! THE BECKONING DOOR IS A FAMOUS PAINTING!

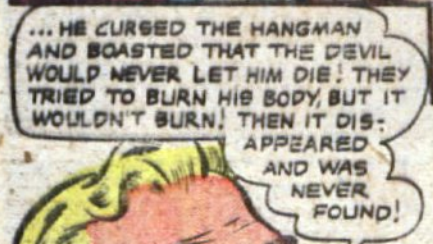
I'VE BEEN AFTER IT FOR YEARS! I SUPPOSE YOU KNOW ITS STRANGE HISTORY? THE ARTIST, SIER DE FERRAC WAS MAD AS A HATTER!

I KNOW! MIXED HIS COLORS WITH HUMAN BLOOD, DIDN'T HE?

YES, AND MURDERED TO GET IT!



JOURNEY INTO FEAR







I'M IN THE CASTLE BEYOND THE DOOR! UGH—THOSE VULTURES ON THAT GIBBET!



POOR DEVILS! THE BONES ARE AS DRY AS DUST! MUST HAVE BEEN HANGING FOR YEARS!



WONDER WHERE THIS DARK PASSAGE GOES?



A DINING CHAMBER! AND EVERY ONE OF THEM DEAD! MUST HAVE DIED INSTANTLY AT THEIR MEAL! HMM—DE FERRAC IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN QUITE AN ARTIST AT POISONING, TOO!



STAIRS LEADING DOWN! TO THE DUNGEON, NO DOUBT! AND ALL THIS REAL, AS SOLID AS I AM! SOMEHOW, WHEN I ENTERED THAT DOOR, I WALKED INTO ANOTHER DIMENSION!



SUDDENLY...

WHAT! I—I THOUGHT I HEARD SOMETHING BEHIND ME! NO—MUST BE MY NERVES!

FOR THE MOMENT, TERROR OVERWHELMS HIM...

I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE, IF I CAN GET OUT! BLAST THIS TORCH, IT WON'T COME OUT!

OWWWW,
MY HAND!

A NASTY BURN! BUT NOW AT LEAST I'LL KNOW IF I'VE BEEN DREAMING ALL THIS!

BUT ONCE MORE...

OH-OH! I'M SURE I HEARD A STEP BEHIND ME THAT TIME! BUT THERE'S NO SIGN OF ANYONE—OR ANYTHING!

THEN...

GAD! THE PRINT OF A B-BLOODY HAND! OR A CLAW! THERE IS S-SOMETHING ALIVE IN HERE! M—MAYBE IT'S WATCHING ME NOW!

IN PANIC HE SLAMS THE DOOR BEHIND HIM...

WHEWW— ANOTHER MINUTE IN THERE AND I'D HAVE BEEN A RAVING MANIAC!

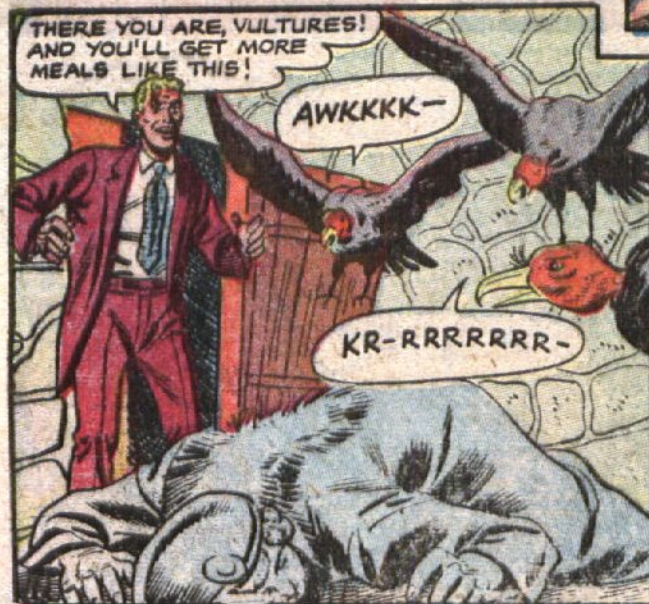
LATER, BACK SAFE IN HIS BEDROOM...

WHAT AN EXPERIENCE! BUT DID IT REALLY HAPPEN? IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I WAS INSIDE THAT PAINTING?

TRENT WOULD LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT THIS! HE WOULD NEVER HAVE HAD THE NERVE TO GO IN!

WAIT A MINUTE! THE BURN! IT HURTS! IT'S REAL! I WAS IN THERE! AND I CAN GO AGAIN IF I WANT TO!

JOURNEY INTO FEAR





WELL, TRENT, HOW DO YOU LIKE IT NOW? STILL GIVE YOU THE CREEPS?

YES! IT'S EVEN MORE HORRIBLE THAN I REMEMBERED IT! UGH!



UGH, INDEED! NOW, YOU FAT LITTLE FAKER, I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT I REALLY THINK OF YOU! HA-HA! SO YOU THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS, DID YOU? I'D HAVE DONE THIS LONG AGO IF I'D HAD A PLACE TO HIDE THE BODY!



MORE FOOD FOR YOU, VULTURES! AND STILL MORE COMING! EAT WELL!

AWWKK-

AK-RRRR-



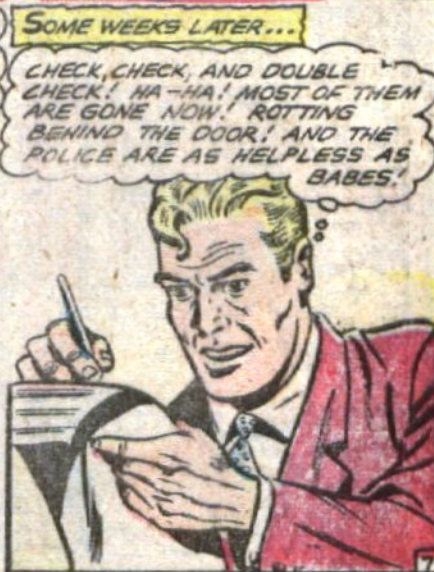
BACK THERE! I KNOW I HEARD A SOUND THEN! LIKE SOMETHING SLITHERING ALONG BEHIND ME!



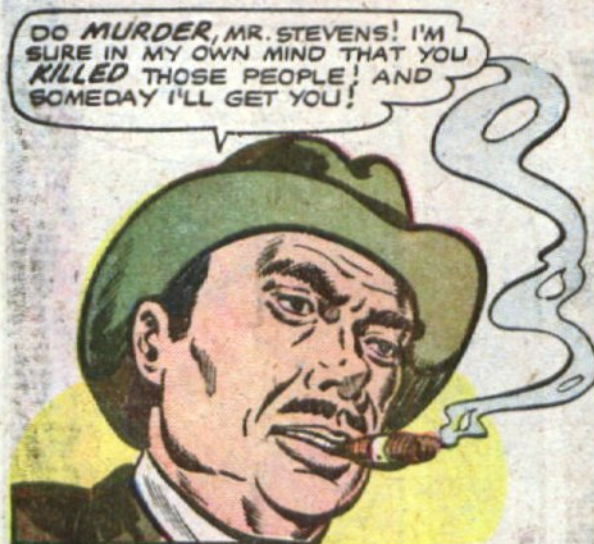
THE CLAW PRINT AGAIN! AND THE BLOOD IS FRESH! WHAT-EVER MAKES THAT MARK MUST COME TO THE DOOR AND WAIT!

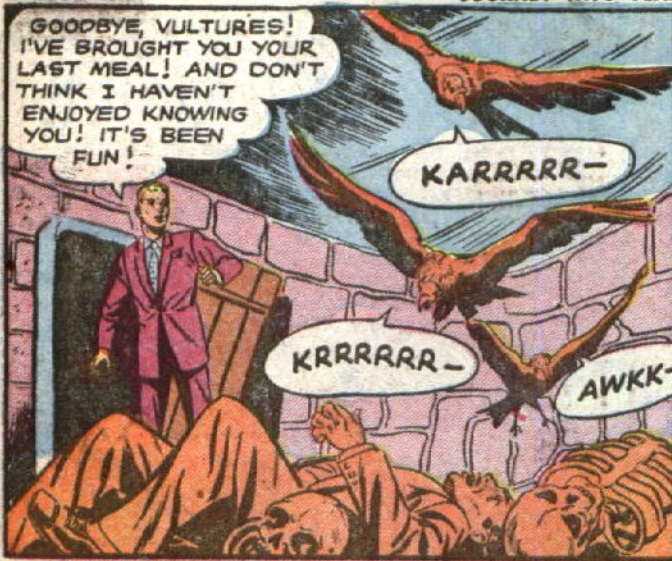


MORE AND MORE I FEEL THAT SOMETHING IS WATCHING ME WHILE I'M IN THERE! BUT IT CAN MEAN ME NO HARM, OR IT WOULD HAVE SHOWN ITSELF BY NOW!



CHECK, CHECK, AND DOUBLE CHECK! HA-HA! MOST OF THEM ARE GONE NOW! ROTTING BEHIND THE DOOR! AND THE POLICE ARE AS HELPLESS AS BABES!

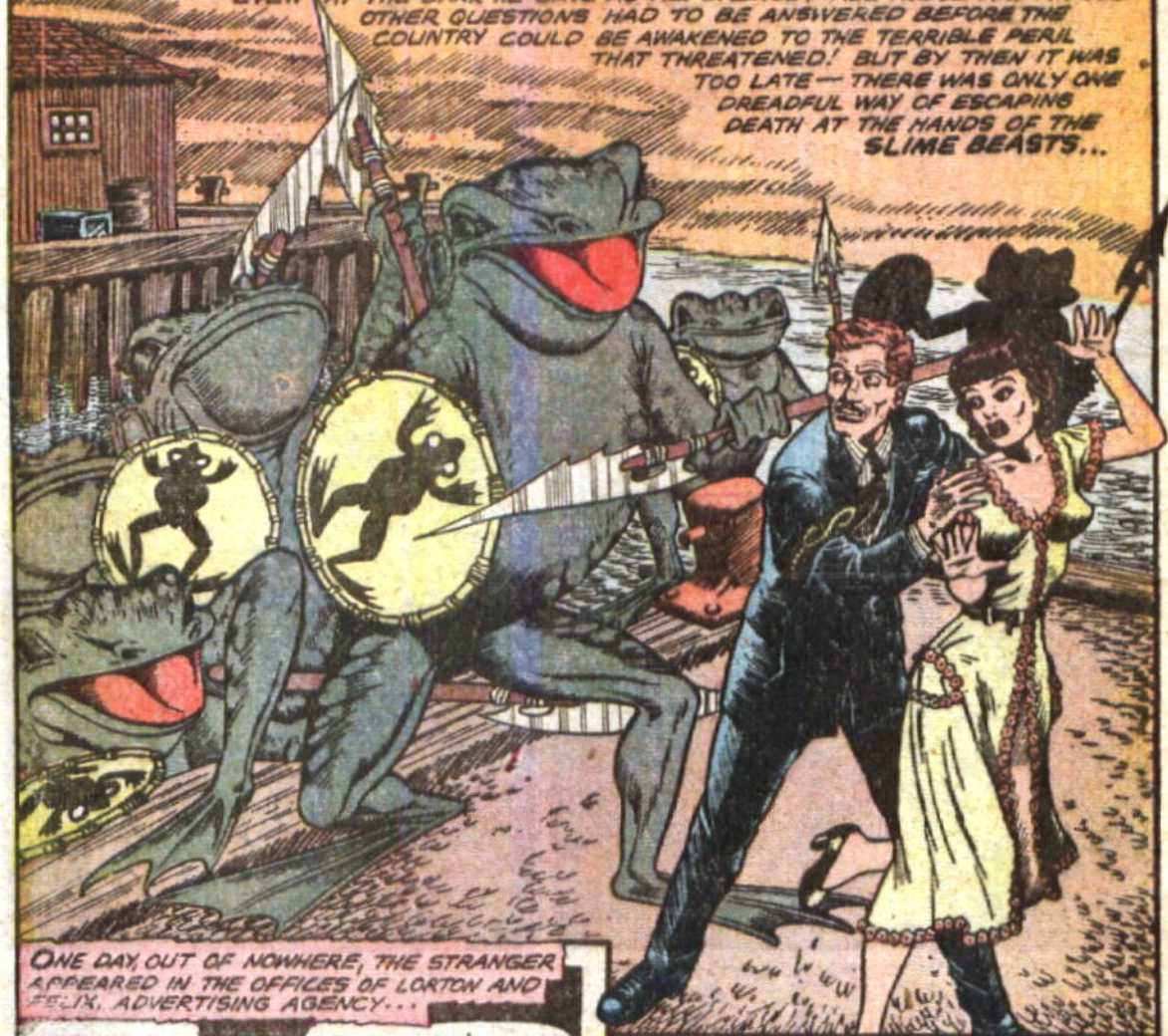




JOURNEY INTO FEAR

ASSIGNMENT HORROR

WHO WAS THE STRANGE MAN THAT NEVER REMOVED HIS GLASSES? WHAT WAS HIS REAL PURPOSE IN VISITING THE ADVERTISING AGENCY? WHY HAD NO ONE EVER HEARD OF HIM, EVEN AT THE BANK HE GAVE AS REFERENCE? ALL THESE AND A DOZEN OTHER QUESTIONS HAD TO BE ANSWERED BEFORE THE COUNTRY COULD BE AWAKENED TO THE TERRIBLE PERIL THAT THREATENED. BUT BY THEN IT WAS TOO LATE—THERE WAS ONLY ONE DREADFUL WAY OF ESCAPING DEATH AT THE HANDS OF THE SLIME BEASTS...



ONE DAY, OUT OF NOWHERE, THE STRANGER APPEARED IN THE OFFICES OF LORTON AND FELIX, ADVERTISING AGENCY...

YES, I'M MAX TAUNTON! WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

MR. TAUNTON! I WAS TOLD TO SEE YOU ABOUT MY ACCOUNT!

MR. SEAGRASS, ISN'T IT?

THAT'S RIGHT! I'M HAROLD SEAGRASS OF MOGUL PICTURES! WE'RE STAGING THE BIGGEST PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN OF ALL TIME!

IS THIS CAMPAIGN FOR ONE PICTURE OR FOR A SERIES?

THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE!



JOURNEY INTO FEAR

FOR JUST ONE PICTURE! A HORROR PICTURE, DIFFERENT FROM ANY THAT HAVE BEEN DONE BEFORE! AN EPIC OF ITS KIND, MY FRIENDS! AND WE WANT TO KEEP IT A SECRET UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT — THAT'S WHY WE AREN'T USING OUR OWN PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT! THERE WOULD BE LEAKS!



THIS PICTURE WILL GIVE YOU AN IDEA! NOTE THE SLIMY BODY, THE GROTESQUE AND BULGING EYES! IN THE STORY THE EARTH IS INVADDED AND CONQUERED BY THESE WEIRD CREATURES!



UGH! THEY'RE HORRIBLE! THEY LOOK LIKE GIANT FROGS!

YEAH! FROGS WITH SPEARS AND LANCES! HORRIBLE ENOUGH, BUT HARDLY LOGICAL! HOW COULD SUCH PRIMITIVES CONQUER US?

THEY HAVE NO NEED FOR COMPLICATED WEAPONS! IN THE PICTURE IT IS SHOWN THAT THEY HAVE BRAINS A THOUSAND TIMES MORE DEVELOPED THAN OURS — BUT HERE'S WHAT I HAD IN MIND! WE'LL HIRE MEN, DRESS THEM IN FROG COSTUMES, AND STAGE A GIGANTIC PARADE ALONG THE

MAIN AVENUE DOWN HERE! A PARADE! HMM — GOOD IDEA!



AFTER THE STRANGER LEAVES...

YOU KNOW, I'M A LITTLE CURIOUS ABOUT OUR MR. SEAGRASS! HE'S PROBABLY OKAY, BUT ON THE OTHER HAND HE MIGHT BE SOME KIND OF CRACKPOT OR BUNCO ARTIST! I'D BETTER CHECK!

AND THIS CHECK IS STRANGE! BANK OF SARGASSO! HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF IT? I CERTAINLY HAVEN'T!



SO MAX TAUNTON CALLS MOSUL PICTURES...

HI, PETERS! THIS IS TAUNTON AT LORTON AND FELIX! SAY, HAVE YOU A MR. SEAGRASS THERE? A BIG WHEEL?

SEAGRASS? NOT HERB, BOY! NEVER HEARD OF HIM! SOMEBODY IS RIBBING YOU!



JOURNEY INTO FEAR

LATER THAT NIGHT... WELL, LIZA, THAT ABOUT DOES IT! **NOBODY** EVER HEARD OF THIS SEAGRASS CHARACTER! WE'VE LOOKED IN EVERY BOOK IN THE OFFICE, CALLED **EVERYBODY!** THE GUY HASN'T EVEN GOT AN ADDRESS!

SO WHAT DO WE DO?

I THINK WE'LL KEEP THIS TO OURSELVES AND PLAY ALONG! I'VE GOT A REAL BUMP OF CURIOSITY ABOUT MR. SEAGRASS! HE'S A NEW TYPE!

THERE'S NO BANK OF SARGASSO, EITHER! BUT HE DIDN'T CASH THE CHECK!

TWO DAYS LATER... WELL, MR. SEAGRASS, YOU STILL WANT TO STAGE THAT PARADE? WE'D BETTER GET STARTED IF YOU DO!

YES, OF COURSE! HIRE THE MARCHERS AND HAVE THE COSTUMES MADE AT ONCE! I'LL LEAVE THESE PICTURES AS A GUIDE!

BUT AS SOON AS SEAGRASS LEAVES, THE SUSPICIOUS COUPLE FOLLOW, ACCORDING TO A PREARRANGED PLAN...

HURRY, MAX! WE DON'T WANT TO LOSE HIM! MAYBE WE CAN FIND OUT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT!

IF IT'S A RACKET, I'VE NEVER HEARD OF IT! WHAT CAN HE POSSIBLY STAND TO GAIN BY ALL THIS?

SEAGRASS, APPARENTLY UNAWARE THAT HE IS BEING FOLLOWED, PLUNGES INTO THE CROWD...

THERE HE GOES! SEEMS TO BE HEADING SOUTH ON WATER STREET! HMMM—WONDER WHAT HE COULD WANT IN THAT DISTRICT?

IT IS STRANGE! NOTHING DOWN HERE BUT THE DOCKS AND OLD WAREHOUSES!

AND IT IS TO AN ABANDONED WAREHOUSE THAT SEAGRASS LEADS THEM...

UGH, WHAT A NEIGHBORHOOD! NOTHING BUT RATS AND TERRIBLE SMELLS! I DON'T LIKE IT, MAX!

OR ME! BUT I'M STILL CURIOUS! WHEN HE GOES IN, WE'LL FOLLOW! EASY, NOW, DON'T MAKE ANY NOISE!

BUT THE MOMENT THEY ENTER, THEY ARE SEIZED AND BAGS CLAPPED OVER THEIR HEADS...

AH, WE HAVE THEM NOW!

GAAAAAA—

HELP—EEEEEEEE— I C—CAN'T BREATHE! OHHHHH—

TAKE THEM TO HIM!

JOURNEY INTO FEAR

LATER, THEY FIND THEMSELVES IN A BARREN ROOM, TIGHTLY BOUND TO CHAIRS...



WELL, MAX, WHAT DO WE DO NOW? I—I'M FRIGHTENED! WE DIDN'T COUNT ON ANYTHING LIKE THIS!

THAT SEAGRASS IS A CRACKPOT AFTER ALL! SORRY I GOT YOU INTO THIS, BABY!

SUDDENLY...

HELLO, MY FRIENDS! I'M NOT AT ALL HAPPY ABOUT THIS, BUT YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME POKING AROUND! REALLY DANGEROUS—FOR YOU!

HOW DARE YOU! LET US GO AT ONCE!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR GAME IS, BUSTER, BUT YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR! YOU'RE IN TROUBLE! WE'VE GOT LAWS ABOUT THIS SORT OF THING!



YOU ARE WRONG AGAIN! YOU ARE THE ONES WHO ARE IN TROUBLE! JUST HOW MUCH TROUBLE YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE IF I TOLD YOU! BUT NOW I MUST LEAVE YOU FOR A TIME! I'VE DECIDED TO STAGE THE PARADE AT ONCE!

LEFT ALONE ONCE MORE...

DID YOU HEAR, MAX? HE'S GOING TO PUT ON THAT CRAZY PARADE NOW! WHAT IS THIS, ANYWAY?

I DON'T KNOW, ANGEL, BUT NOW I'M REALLY SCARED! MAYBE HE'S SOME SORT OF MANIAC! SCOOT OVER AND SEE IF YOU CAN GET THE LIGHTER OUT OF MY POCKET!



SOON...



I—I THINK I'VE GOT IT! I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING! OOPS, ALMOST DROPPED IT!

BE CAREFUL, FOR PETE'S SAKE! NOW TRY TO BURN THESE ROPES OFF OF ME! AND TRY TO BURN THE ROPES NOT ME!

THE ROOM FILLS WITH SMOKE—AND THE ODOR OF SCORCHED FLESH...

I—I'M DOING THE BEST I CAN, MAX! DOES IT HURT MUCH? ARE THE ROPES GIVING WAY YET?

N-NOT YET! OHHHH! A LITTLE TO THE—(GROAN)—LEFT! THERE! OUCH! I THINK THAT'S DOING IT! OWWWWWWW—



JOURNEY INTO FEAR

AFTER A FEW AGONIZING MOMENTS, THEY ARE FREE...

YOU'D BETTER GET SOMETHING FOR YOUR HANDS! THEY'RE TERRIBLY BURNED!

NO TIME FOR THAT NOW! WHERE'S THE PHONE, BUD?

OVER THERE, BUT...



COME ON, COME ON! I TRIED TO TELL YOU, MISTER! PHONES ALL OVER THE CITY ARE OUT OF ORDER! FUNNY, HUH?



LATER...

NOT SO FUNNY, MAX! WE'VE TRIED FOUR PHONES AND THEY WERE ALL OUT—OH, LOOK AT THE CROWD!

YEAH! AND I'VE GOT A NASTY HUNCH WHAT IT IS! **THE PARADE!**



AND SO IT IS...

GREAT SCOTT, THAT CRACKPOT REALLY DID IT! BUT HOW, AND WHY? WHAT SORT OF CRAZY GAME IS HE PLAYING?

MAX! THOSE AREN'T MEN IN COSTUME! THOSE ARE **REAL FROGS!**



SUDDENLY...

AHHHHH—KILLING ME!

YIIIIII—

OH! THEY'RE REAL!



THE AVENUE RUNS WITH BLOOD AS THE FROG BEASTS MASSACRE THE HELPLESS PEOPLE, THEN CONVERGE ON CITY HALL...

SEIZE THE MAYOR AND ALL OFFICIALS! LET NO ONE ESCAPE! SEND A DETAIL TO EACH RADIO STATION AND TAKE OVER! PROCLAIM OUR RULE!



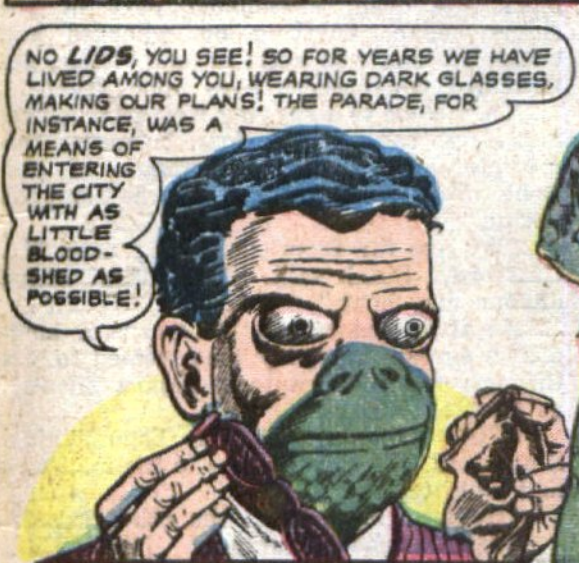
MEAN-TIME...

OH, HOW HORRIBLE! THOSE BRUTES! WHAT CAN WE DO, MAX? THEY'LL KILL US TOO!

I DON'T KNOW! GOT TO HAVE TIME TO THINK!



JOURNEY INTO FEAR



GHOST CLINIC

by Doctor Shade



SACRIFICE TO KASTE

REACHING THE end of the fashionable district, Crafford stopped the car and parked it at the other man's direction.

"Why can't we drive on?" Crafford asked with a little asperity.

The other smiled. He was small and swarthy-skinned.

"It would be best to walk, Mr. Crafford. The temple of Kaste, as I told you, is deep in the slums; not live slums, either, but dead ones." His eyes narrowed. "To drive an expensive car like yours through a slum neighborhood would excite comment. No, no, we want no comment. The God Kaste hides himself where it is best to hide — where there is no one to talk, beyond the very edge of the city."

Crafford felt the other man's eyes upon him. Suddenly a stab of fear went through him.

"Perhaps, perhaps, Mr. Singh," (Crafford knew him only as that), "I have been too hasty. Perhaps another time. . . ."

"Another time may be too late," Mr. Singh breathed softly. "You have spent much time and energy, Mr. Crafford, to get in touch with we who are the high priests of Kaste. I know your need. Do you dare risk . . . ?"

Crafford shuddered. No, he knew he could not risk it. He *had* to know. With the empty soul of the atheist he had grown colder as he aged, feeling only the abyss of the great nothingness after death. He knew he had to die. And all his life he had searched for some proof of the supernatural, some proof that beyond life was not merely the dark horror of the grave, but even, perhaps, something better.

And still . . .

He turned to Mr. Singh again, for he had been lost in thought, staring into the deep depths of the slums, down a maze of alleyways that twisted and turned before they wove out of sight.

"But Kaste," he began. "Kaste is a god of pain."

A faint smile flickered over the urbane face of Mr. Singh.

"That is true. Kaste is the real God, the only God, Mr. Crafford. Because life is pain. Life was born for pain. Pleasure is only the gracious interlude in pain that Kaste allows us." His voice dropped significantly. "You too are in pain, are you not? Does not your mind torture you, Mr. Crafford, because you believe in nothing? Was that not why you came to us — so you could believe in something?"

"Yes," Crafford said. "Yes, that is so."

"Kaste will convince you, Mr. Crafford. I can promise you that," Mr. Singh said and paused. Again the faint smile flickered round his lips. "Let us go."

THEY MOVED forward, Mr. Singh leading. Down lightless alleys they went, past tenements and crumbling old brick houses, past sections of the waterfront where music sounded hoarsely from behind the boarded-up windows of illegal bars. They crossed a square or two, went through a gate in between two buildings and emerged on another street. Beyond them, on another block, the dead, abandoned part of the slums began, abutting on wharves and docks. No one was here, no one visible, yet Crafford could sense eyes upon them.

They came to a sagging wharf structure. Mr. Singh rapped at a door. It opened immediately, disclosing a rectangle of dim light. Followed by Crafford, he stepped within.

"We are far from everything here, Mr. Crafford," Singh said. "Far from where anyone may hear."

As if in answer to his words a long-drawn scream of agony that seemed to sift through many doors tore, almost silently, at Crafford's ears.

"The ceremony. It has begun," Mr. Singh said. His eyes shifted to the man who had admitted them.

"He has consented?" the other asked.

Singh laughed harshly.

"For the privilege of falling under the beneficent spell of Kaste, Mr. Crafford has agreed to the final requirement. If necessary, he will sacrifice anything he is called upon to give up. Is that not so, Mr. Crafford?"

"Anything," Crafford said hoarsely. "As much money as you want, provided you can prove to me that your worship of Kaste is not a fraud, that Kaste really is powerful, that . . ."

"You will not be disappointed, sir," the other said, then jerked a thumb toward another door. "Take him down, Singh, to the place of worship."

They went through a door, started descending a winding staircase. Crafford knew they must be surrounded on all sides by water. Clever of them to tunnel down into the mud under an abandoned wharf, he thought.

Again the scream of agony beat at his ears.

"The sacrifice to Kaste," Mr. Singh said, pausing to listen almost in ecstasy.

"And the victim?" Crafford said.

"Along the waterfront, Mr. Crafford, many men are smuggled into America from Africa, from Asia, from elsewhere. Who is to notice the disappearance of a man who was never — officially — here?" He chuckled in a low voice, threw open a door.

SOFT MUSIC swept out, mingled with the floods of incense. For awhile, as they entered a great, domed chamber, Crafford could see nothing. The violent pulsing of his heart sent waves of shapeless color past his eyeballs. Then, slowly, he began to see. The room was not crowded. The worship of Kaste, he saw, was not a poor man's religion. Every one of the celebrants were as well dressed as he, under their outer coats which lay on the floor behind them. They stared, eyes blazing, fixed, almost glazed, at the scene before them, on the low altar of red stone.

The body of the victim, already flayed of most of its skin, was a thing too horrible to look at. Crafford shuddered in a cold agony of horror. His eyes shifted to the robed priest of Kaste wielding the torture knife, and then to the God Kaste itself.

It was almost disappointingly normal. No hideous, staring visage, no bloated replica of a crocodile, or a snake, or a beetle, nothing non-anthropomorphic at all. Kaste was the stone image of an ordinary man, squatting, legs crossed like an oriental fakir, staring straight ahead of him with eyes of stone.

A final shriek from the victim. Then, as the torture knife rose to deliver the death blow, Crafford gasped.

The eyes of Kaste were moving!

As if in a kind of weary agony themselves, the stony eyes came alive. Crafford stiffened, watching. The eyes moved slowly from end to end of the altar, taking in the spectacle of awful pain.

A fierce exultation swept through Crafford. Kaste was real! If real stone could move, if its eyes could see, then Kaste's power was great. Of course, Kaste was a God of pain, but what would that have to do with him? A surge of joy flooded through him, to be cut short by the chant of the priest. Once more Crafford fixed his eyes on the altar and the image of the God. Now, in the eyes he saw a glazing. Crafford gasped.

Great Kaste was disintegrating!

CRUMBLING, like a long-buried corpse, the image of the God slowly fell to

powder. A sneer appeared on Crafford's lips.

"A fake!" he shouted, turning to Singh, whose startled eyes came full on him. "Why, that thing's nothing but a fraud! You probably work the eyes with wires, or something — and it fell apart!" He began to laugh hysterically. Singh's eyes danced with a cold anger.

"Drink this, Crafford!" Singh handed him a goblet, containing some winy liquid. "This will steady you. Kaste is no fraud!"

"Kaste!" Crafford took the goblet, drained it, shaking with hysterical laughter. Another fake, he thought. Once more he had been bilked. "Your God is no better than any other!"

He took one step toward Singh. Then a hideous pain shot through him. Abruptly, two servitors sprang from the darkness of the walls, picked him up with Singh's help, bundled him into a small room.

Swiftly he was stripped. His stiffening, paralyzed limbs were being forced into new and strange positions. Now he knew what had happened. The liquid — it had tasted like wine but also like fire — had frozen him. Already he could feel his flesh hardening into stone. But his brain, his eyes remained alive.

Before him, Singh hovered, his dark eyes flashing menace.

"You insulted Kaste, Mr. Crafford, by disbelieving," Singh said. "And Kaste is a vengeful God. Had you believed, another would have been chosen to replace Kaste in his new incarnation. Within yourself you will feel Kaste — for Kaste is the pain you feel, that pain that will deepen and lengthen and grow! Pick him up!"

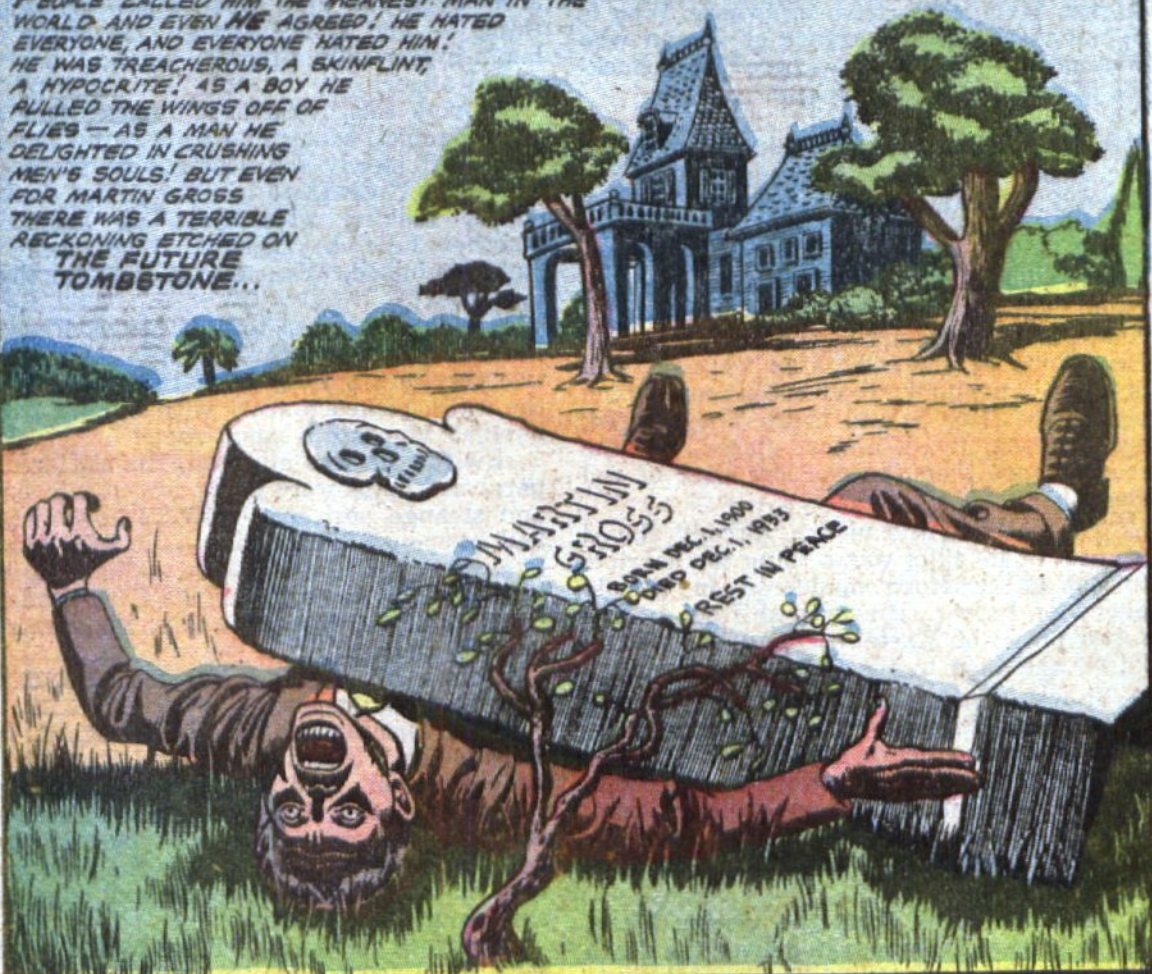
Crafford felt himself lifted by the servitors. He closed his eyes in an agony of pain. He was placed on the stone dais, before the red altar, amid crumbled fragments of stone.

"You will suffer much and long and see many painful sacrifices," Singh whispered into his ear. "But your eyes will grow weary with your own pain. You will open them only when a victim has been tortured to the intensity of your own agony. Thus, you will serve Kaste, by being the earthly representation of Kaste, himself. Until, like the other before you, the atoms of your petrified flesh will crumble from the very intensity of your pain!"

Crafford was drowned in the pain of Kaste. He had looked for a God. Now he was a God, himself; a god of pain. The irony was drowned in an ocean of tortured nerves. His eyes opened with some stronger impulse. Before him, a new, nameless, writhing victim had been tied to the red altar. And the instruments of torture were again at work.

THIS BODY is MINE!

PEOPLE CALLED HIM THE MEANEST MAN IN THE WORLD AND EVEN HE AGREED! HE HATED EVERYONE, AND EVERYONE HATED HIM! HE WAS TREACHEROUS, A SKINFLINT, A HYPOCRITE! AS A BOY HE PULLED THE WINGS OFF OF FLIES — AS A MAN HE DELIGHTED IN CRUSHING MEN'S SOULS! BUT EVEN FOR MARTIN GROSS THERE WAS A TERRIBLE RECKONING ETCHED ON THE FUTURE TOMBSTONE...



MARTIN GROSS, HIS CRAFTY BRAIN OVERWORKED, HAS BEEN CONFINED TO AN INSTITUTION FOR A YEAR...

HELLO, MR. GROSS!
DOCTOR WISEMAN
WANTS TO SEE YOU!

ABOUT TIME, TOO!
WHAT DID THE
BOARD SAY?



I CAN'T TELL YOU THAT, BECAUSE
I DON'T KNOW, BUT I'VE GOT A
HUNCH IT'S
GOOD NEWS!

YOU MEAN THEY'RE
LETTING ME OUT!
DECLARING ME
SANE?

OPHRENIC
WARD





AND... WE'VE DECIDED TO SEND YOU HOME, GROSS! YOU'RE AS SANE AS I AM! BUT I WOULD ADVISE THAT YOU CHANGE YOUR WAY OF LIFE IN THE FUTURE!

BAH! THERE NEVER WAS ANYTHING WRONG WITH ME! I WAS FRAMED!



SO, WASTING NO TIME...

GLAD TO SEE YOU, SIR! WE ALL...

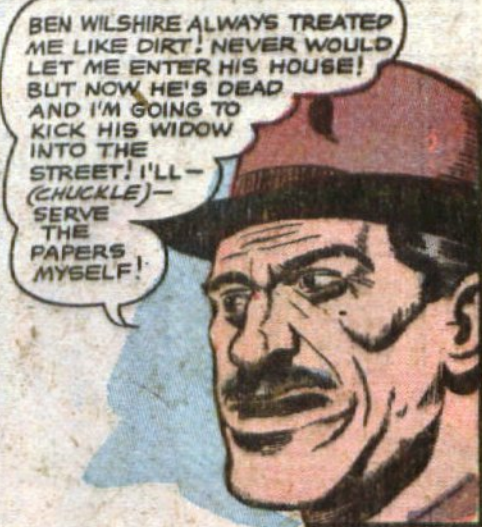
SHUT UP AND DRIVE ME TO THE OLD WILSHIRE PLACE AT ONCE! I'VE GOT A LITTLE BUSINESS TO FINISH UP!

HELLO, MR. GROSS! DID YOU SAY THE WILSHIRE PLACE? BUT SURELY...



I WAS HOPING YOU'D FORGOTTEN ABOUT THE FORECLOSURE ON THE WILSHIRE HOME! AFTER ALL, THE OLD MAN IS DEAD NOW! THERE'S ONLY THE WIDOW!

YOU'RE A FAT-HEADED FOOL, PAYTON! I NEVER FORGET OR FORGIVE! GIVE ME THOSE PAPERS!



BEN WILSHIRE ALWAYS TREATED ME LIKE DIRT! NEVER WOULD LET ME ENTER HIS HOUSE! BUT NOW HE'S DEAD AND I'M GOING TO KICK HIS WIDOW INTO THE STREET! I'LL - (CHUCKLE) - SERVE THE PAPERS MYSELF!



SOON... A LOVELY OLD PLACE! I WISH YOU WOULD RECONSIDER, MR. GROSS!

BAH! I'VE WAITED YEARS FOR THIS! I ONLY WISH WILSHIRE WERE ALIVE TO SEE ME LIVING IN HIS HOUSE!



I'M SORRY, SIR! MRS. WILSHIRE ISN'T SEEING ANYONE - SIR! PLEASE, YOU CAN'T...

OUT OF MY WAY, YOU BLITHERING OLD IDIOT! I OWN THIS HOUSE NOW!

JOURNEY INTO FEAR



WHERE IS THE OLD FOOL? HIDING IN HER ROOM, I'LL BET! BUT SHE'LL NEVER SNUB MARTIN GROSS AGAIN! MAYBE I WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH TO BE INVITED HERE, BUT I'M GOOD ENOUGH TO THROW YOU OUT, AMY WILSHIRE!



OPEN UP! I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE! I'VE — (CHUCKLE) — GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU, AMY! EVICTION PAPERS!

KNOCK
KNOCK



THE DOOR SWINGS SWIFTLY OPEN...

WHERE ARE YOU, YOU BLASTED OLD HAG! I — OHH!



THERE IS NOT A SPARK OF SYMPATHY IN GROSS...

HEH-HEH! HANGED YOURSELF, DID YOU? MUST HAVE KNOWN I WAS COMING! WELL, GOOD RIDDANCE!

LATER...

BUT, MR. GROSS, YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT YOU'RE MOVING IN RIGHT NOW! NOT WITH THAT POOR WOMAN'S BODY STILL WARM!

BLAST IT, PAYTON, YOU'RE A LAWYER, NOT A PARSON! I AM IN, AND I'M STAYING!



I'LL EVEN PAY FOR THE WOMAN'S FUNERAL! HAH-HAH! THE CHEAPEST FUNERAL AND THE SMALLEST STONE! IT'S BETTER THAN POTTER'S FIELD!

GAD! YOU WOULDN'T...



DANG AND BLAST IT TO THE DEVIL! I WILL! NOW GET OUT OF HERE AND DO WHAT I TELL YOU! OR MAYBE YOU DON'T LIKE WORKING FOR ME?

S-SURE! I'LL GO AT ONCE!



THOUGH SHAKEN, MARTIN GROSS IS TOUGH! NEXT DAY HE HAS THE TOMBSTONE REMOVED...



BUT EVEN HIS IRON NERVE IS SHAKEN...

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT! IF I HADN'T SEEN IT MYSELF... BUT I DID! AND THAT CORPSE WAS THE LIVING—ER—DEAD IMAGE OF ME! I LOOKED LIKE I'D BEEN DEAD FOR MONTHS! AND THOSE FOOL POLICE HAD NO EXPLANATION!



A FEW NIGHTS LATER...

YOWWWWW—ANOTHER TOMBSTONE! JUST L-LIKE THE OTHER ONE!



AND A B-BODY! M-ME AGAIN! ME, EXACTLY, EXCEPT THAT I'M ALIVE, AND IT'S—DEAD! I'D BETTER PHONE THE POLICE RIGHT AWAY! MAYBE THIS TIME THEY CAN DO SOMETHING!



BUT...

SORRY, MR. GROSS, BUT WE'RE JUST AS BAFFLED AS YOU ARE! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE, YET IT HAPPENS! ALL WE CAN DO IS LEAVE A STRONG GUARD AROUND THE HOUSE!



BAH! SOME POLICE FORCE!

FOOLS, ALL OF THEM! SOMEONE IS TRYING TO SCARE ME, MAKE ME PANIC. BUT I WON'T! IF THE WILSHIRES HAD ANY RELATIVES ALIVE, I'D KNOW WHERE TO START. BUT THEY HAVEN'T! I'VE INVESTIGATED!



HE WALKS INTO THE LIBRARY AND...

YOWWW—IT'S INSIDE NOW! AND MY BODY UNDER IT, CRUSHED!



THAT SOUND IS THE NERVE OF MARTIN GROSS—SHATTERING TO BITS...

I—I CAN'T TAKE THIS! I'LL LOCK MYSELF IN MY ROOM AND CALL THE POLICE FROM THERE!



BUT ONCE INSIDE HIS ROOM...

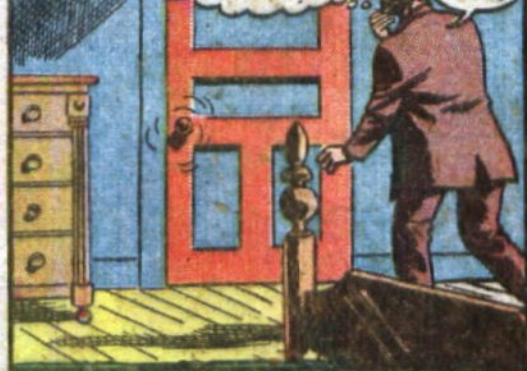
I'M THE FOOL NOW! THERE ARE COPS ALL OVER THE PLACE! ALL I HAVE TO DO IS OPEN THE WINDOW AND CALL ONE—OH, THAT'S PROBABLY AN OFFICER AT THE DOOR NOW!



BUT THERE IS SOMETHING VERY QUEER ABOUT THE DOOR! NO ONE SPEAKS, BUT THE DOOR TREMBLES OMINOUSLY...

SOMEONE OR SOMETHING WANTS IN! B-BUT WHY DON'T THEY SPEAK?

W-WHO IS IT?



THERE IS NO ANSWER! BUT THE DOOR CREAKS AND TREMBLES UNDER A FURIOUS ASSAULT...



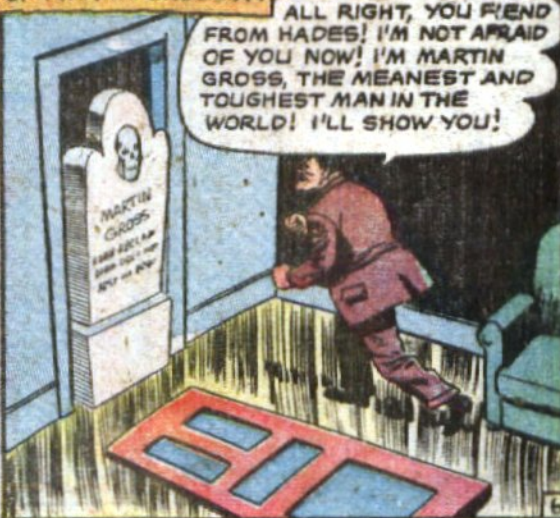
AND THERE IT STANDS...

IT'S COME AFTER ME! OWWWWWWWW—



THEN SOMETHING SNAPS IN THE FEVERED BRAIN OF MARTIN GROSS...

ALL RIGHT, YOU FRIEND FROM HADES! I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU NOW! I'M MARTIN GROSS, THE MEANEST AND TOUGHEST MAN IN THE WORLD! I'LL SHOW YOU!



SWEATING AND SCREAMING, HIS RAGE GIVING HIM SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH, THE MAN SHOVED THE LEERING TOMBSTONE TOWARD THE STAIRS...

I'LL SHOVE YOU DOWN, YOU MONSTER! I'LL SMASH YOU INTO A THOUSAND PIECES!

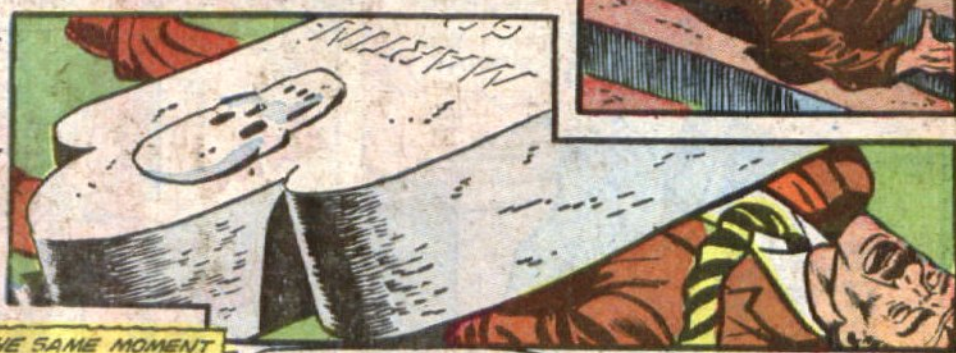


BUT HIS FOOT SLIPS...

YIIII — SLIPPING! I CAN'T LET GO! THE TOMBSTONE, IT'S STICKY — IT'S HOLDING ME!



SO IN THE END THE TOMBSTONE WINS! MARTIN GROSS LIES A SMASHED AND BLEEDING CORPSE AT THE FOOT OF THE STAIRS! AT LAST THE BODY BENEATH THE STONE IS THE REAL GROSS...



AT EXACTLY THE SAME MOMENT IN THE INSANE ASYLUM NOT FAR AWAY...

TOO BAD! POOR OLD TURNER! GROSS BUY! HE KEPT MUST HAVE BEEN THINKING HE DURING THE NIGHT! WAS GETTING OUT OF HERE!

YES, HE WAS A HOPELESS CASE! JUST SO DARNED MEAN THAT HE WENT CRAZY! BY THE LOOK ON HIS FACE, HE MUST HAVE HAD AN AWFUL DREAM JUST BEFORE HE DIED!

YEAH!

MAYBE HE DREAMED HE WAS OUT, AND DIDN'T LIKE IT! WELL, I'VE GOT PAPERS TO MAKE OUT! WHAT'S THE DATE?

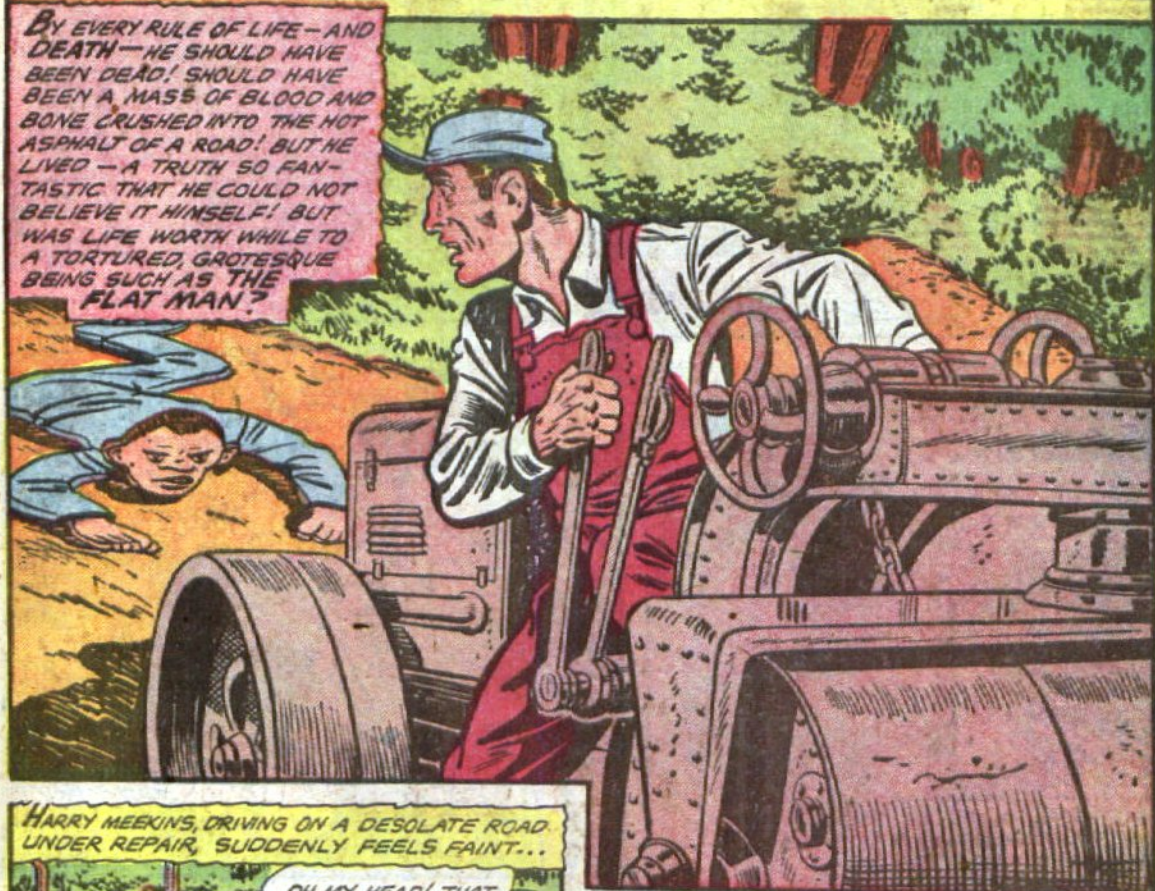
DECEMBER FIRST — 1953!



The End

The FLAT MAN

BY EVERY RULE OF LIFE—AND DEATH—HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN DEAD! SHOULD HAVE BEEN A MASS OF BLOOD AND BONE CRUSHED INTO THE HOT ASPHALT OF A ROAD! BUT HE LIVED—A TRUTH SO FANTASTIC THAT HE COULD NOT BELIEVE IT HIMSELF! BUT WAS LIFE WORTH WHILE TO A TORTURED, GROTESQUE BEING SUCH AS THE FLAT MAN?



HARRY MEEKINS, DRIVING ON A DESOLATE ROAD UNDER REPAIR, SUDDENLY FEELS FAINT...



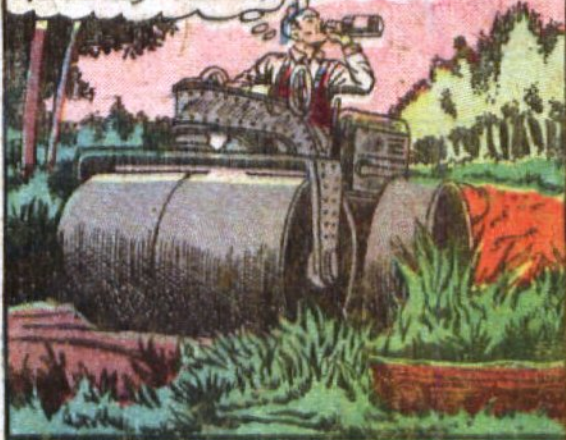
OH, MY HEAD! THAT TERRIBLE PAIN BEHIND MY EYES AGAIN! I C-CAN'T SEE A THING!

D-DON'T DARE DRIVE IN THIS CONDITION! I'D BETTER STOP AND REST—OH—GOING TO FAINT...

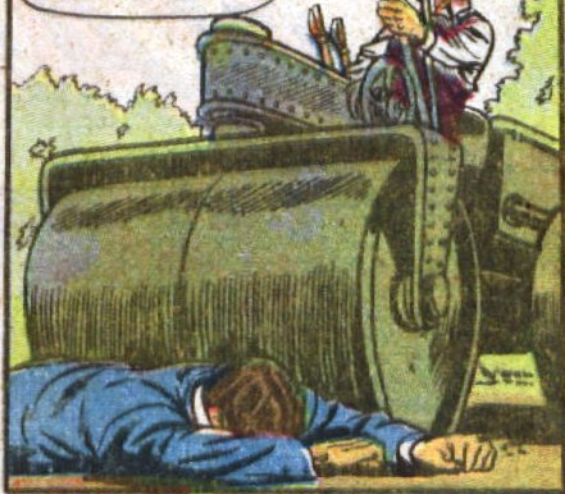


MEANTIME, JUST DOWN THE ROAD, TRAGEDY LOOMS...

HAH-HAH—GOOD THING THE FOREMAN AND THE REST OF THE GANG AREN'T WORKING ON THIS STRETCH OF ROAD TODAY! GIVES ME A CHANCE TO ROLL AND— (CHUCKLE)—RELAX!



OH, MERRILY I ROLL ALONG, ROLL ALONG, ROLL ALONG— MERRILY I...



...ROLL ALONG! HEY, THERE'S A HECK OF A BUMP! SOME GRADING CREW WE GOT, LEAVING A THING LIKE THAT! MAYBE I...



...BETTER TAKE A LOOK! THEN I'LL TELL THE FOREMAN WHAT I THINK OF HIM! B-BUT— W-WAIT A MINUTE! NO! OH, NO!



YIIIIII— A M-MAN! DEAD! I DID IT! I KILLED HIM, SMASHED HIM WITH THE ROLLER! B-BUT HOW DID HE GET HERE? I DIDN'T SEE HIM!

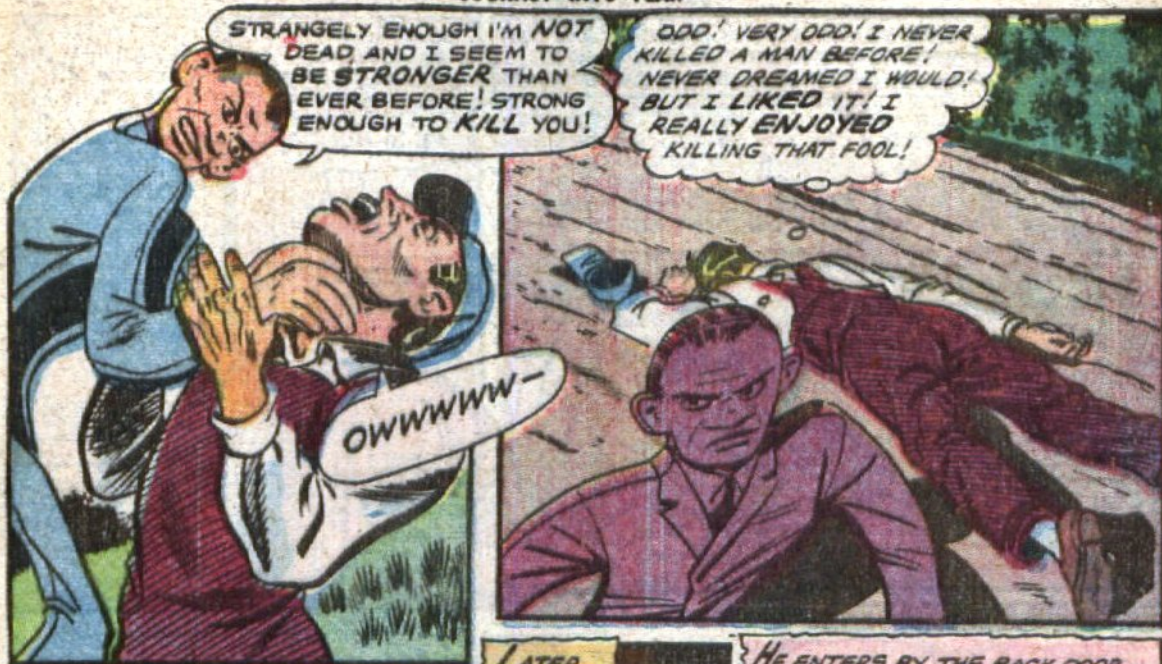


SUDDENLY, THE DRIVER GIVES A SCREAM OF TERROR...

H-HUH! YOU'RE ALIVE! YOWWWWW—

YOU CARELESS IDIOT! YOU'LL PAY FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO ME!





LATER...

I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS AT ALL! I'M CRUSHED ABSOLUTELY FLAT, YET I FEEL FINE! BETTER THAN I HAVE IN YEARS! BUT I'D BETTER GET HOME AND CALL A DOCTOR JUST THE SAME!

I WONDER HOW SARAH WILL TAKE THIS? GOING TO BE QUITE A SHOCK FOR A WIFE WHEN THE HUSBAND COMES HOME FLAT!

HE ENTERS BY THE BACK DOOR...

THAT YOU, HARRY? YOU'RE JUST IN TIME FOR SOME TEA, DARLING!

NO, SARAH! DON'T COME IN JUST YET! I—I WANT TO TALK TO YOU FIRST! THERE'S SOMETHING...



TOO LATE...

HARRY, I— OH— EEEEEEE—

SARAH, I—I HAD AN ACCIDENT! I WANTED TO BREAK IT TO YOU GRADUALLY!



FAINTED DEAD AWAY! I—I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW HORRIBLE I MUST LOOK! STILL, SHE MIGHT HAVE BEEN MORE UNDERSTANDING! THAT LOOK OF SICK DISGUST ON HER FACE...



A FEW WEEKS LATER, SARAH GETS A DIVORCE! AND THE FLAT MAN, FULLY REALIZING NOW WHAT A HORROR HE IS, LIVES ALONE IN AN ISOLATED OLD HOUSE! ONE STORMY NIGHT...

SO THERE IS ABSOLUTELY **NOTHING** YOU CAN DO FOR ME, DOCTOR? I MUST GO THROUGH **LIFE LIKE THIS?**

I CAN DO **NOTHING**, SIR! NOR CAN ANY OTHER DOCTOR! YOUR CASE IS THE STRANGEST IN ALL MEDICAL HISTORY! BY RIGHTS YOU SHOULD HAVE DIED ON THAT ROAD!

SOMEHOW YOUR VITAL ORGANS, THOUGH FLATTENED, WERE NOT INJURED! SO YOU MAY LIVE TO BE A HUNDRED!

A HUNDRED YEARS—LOOKING LIKE THIS? WHAT A JOKE—ON ME!

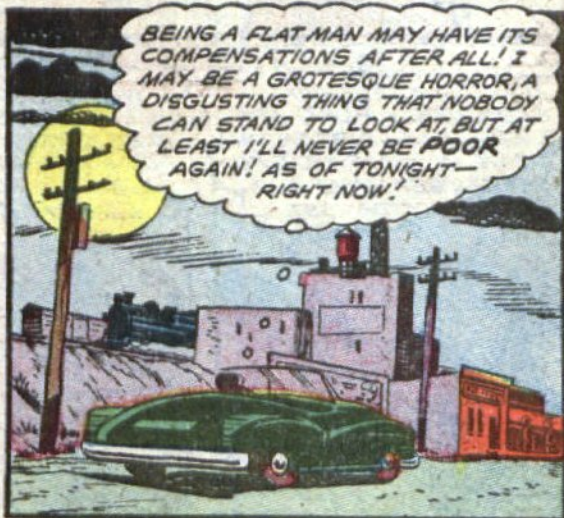


LATER, ALONE WITH HIS BITTERNESS...

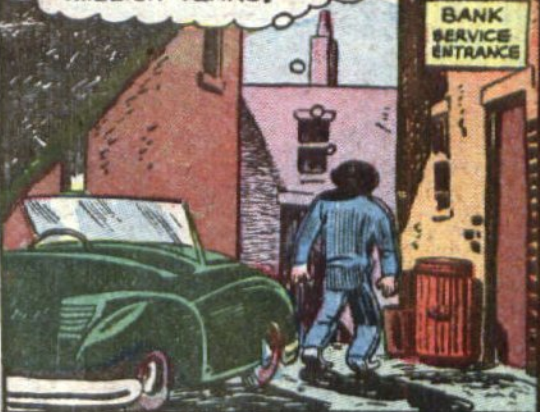
WELL, I'VE HEARD THE VERICT! EVERY DOCTOR TOLD ME THE SAME! SO I'LL FOOL NO MORE WITH DOCTORS! FROM NOW ON I LIVE **ALONE!**



TIME PASSES AND THE FLAT MAN MAKES BIG PLANS! NOW THAT HE HAS NO WIFE AND NO FRIENDS, HE IS DETERMINED TO HAVE **ONE** THING—**MONEY!** ONE DARK NIGHT, HE IS READY...



HOW THOSE POOR FOOLS OF BANK OFFICIALS ARE GOING TO FEEL TOMORROW! THEY'LL NEVER—(CHUCKLE)—FIGURE IT OUT IN A MILLION YEARS!



THEY DIDN'T FIGURE ON ME WHEN THEY BUILT THIS BANK DOOR! BUT THEN, HOW **COULD** THEY?

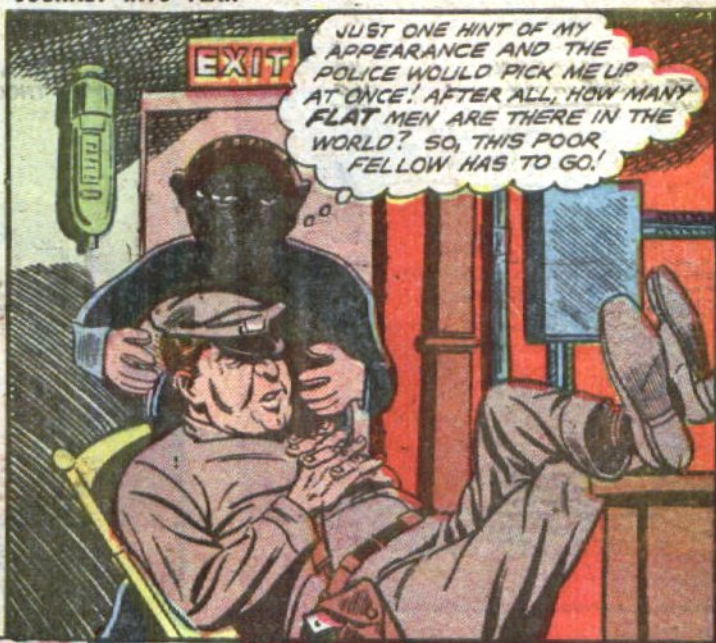
BANK SERVICE ENTRANCE





HE SLITHERS BENEATH THE DOOR WITH THE EASE OF A SNAKE...

SO FAR, SO GOOD! BUT THERE'S PROBABLY A GUARD AROUND SOMEWHERE! I HATE TO KILL, BUT I CAN'T TAKE ANY CHANCES! NOBODY MUST SEE ME!



JUST ONE HINT OF MY APPEARANCE AND THE POLICE WOULD PICK ME UP AT ONCE! AFTER ALL, HOW MANY FLAT MEN ARE THERE IN THE WORLD? SO, THIS POOR FELLOW HAS TO GO!



THERE! ALMOST OVER!

GUUUUUU—

WRAPPING HIS FLAT BODY AROUND THE GUARD LIKE A PYTHON, THE FLAT MAN SQUEEZES HIS PREY TO DEATH...

MINUTES LATER...

NOTHING TO IT! I TOOK ONLY LARGE BILLS, SLID THEM UNDER THE DOOR AHEAD OF ME! HAH—HAH—THE VAULT DOOR WAS AS EASY AS THE OTHERS!



BUT SOMETHING IS MISSING...

OVER FIFTY THOUSAND FOR ONE NIGHT'S WORK! BUT THE TROUBLE IS—THERE'S NOBODY TO SHARE IT WITH!

THERE WON'T EVER BE ANYONE, AS LONG AS I LIVE! LOOK AT ME! I NEED A WIFE—BUT WHO WOULD MARRY ME? STILL, THERE MUST BE A WAY...



SOME DAYS LATER, A STRANGE AD APPEARS IN NEWSPAPERS OVER THE COUNTRY...

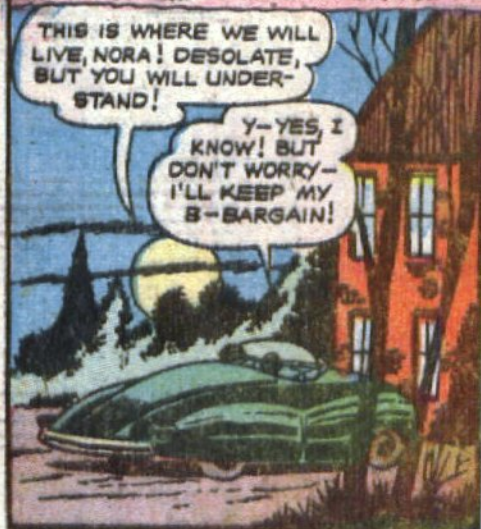
WANTED! A WIFE! VERY WEALTHY MAN OF RATHER UNUSUAL APPEARANCE DESIRES A WIFE AND COMPANION! APPLICANTS MUST BE YOUNG, PRETTY, INTELLIGENT, AND ABOVE ALL, COMPASSIONATE! SEND ALL LETTERS TO BOX C-111, CARE OF THIS NEWSPAPER...

AND SUCH IS THE POWER OF MONEY, AND THE LURE OF THE UNKNOWN, THAT THE FLAT MAN FINDS A WIFE! HER NAME, NORA BAYLES, HER BACKGROUND, DUBIOUS! AFTER THE WEDDINGS...

THIS IS WHERE WE WILL LIVE, NORA! DESOLATE, BUT YOU WILL UNDERSTAND!

Y-YES, I KNOW! BUT DON'T WORRY—I'LL KEEP MY B-BARGAIN!

JUST REMEMBER THE TERMS OF OUR AGREEMENT! I'M **NOT** IN LOVE WITH YOU! I'M HERE BECAUSE I WANT MONEY, A LOT OF MONEY, AND YOU AGREED TO GIVE IT TO ME!



I KNOW, NORA! BUT HOW DO YOU LIKE THE HOUSE? I HAD IT DONE COMPLETELY OVER JUST FOR YOU!

VERY NICE! AT LEAST YOU KNOW HOW TO SPEND MONEY!

YES, I'LL SPEND MONEY ON YOU! ALL YOU WANT! YOU CAN HAVE ANYTHING, ONLY TRY TO BE A LITTLE KIND TO ME, MY DEAR!

UGH—LIKE A SNAKE TOUCHING ME!



I KNOW HOW I LOOK, NORA! I DON'T BLAME YOU FOR WINCING! BUT I HOPE, THAT IN TIME, YOU MAY EVEN GET USED TO MY APPEARANCE!

LATER, AS SHE LOCKS HER DOOR...

OH, WHAT AN ORDEAL! BUT I CAN STAND IT FOR A LITTLE WHILE, IF I MUST! I'M HIS WIFE NOW, AND I WANT ALL HIS MONEY!





TIME TO TAKE THESE BLASTED PILLS THE DOCTOR PRESCRIBED! BUT WAIT A MINUTE—SOMETHING IS WRONG HERE!

ONE OF THESE CAPSULES IS LARGER THAN THE OTHERS! I DON'T REMEMBER SEEING ANY OF THIS SIZE BEFORE! AND NORA WAS FOOLING AROUND WITH THEM THE OTHER DAY—
HMM, I JUST WONDER...



SOME NORA, MY DEAR! THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT YOU TO DO FOR ME!

YES? WHAT IS IT?



THERE'S A VERY ODD-LOOKING CAPSULE IN MY MEDICINE BOTTLE! I WANT YOU TO TAKE IT!

ME! OH, NO, I—I COULDN'T! IT WOULD MAKE ME DEATHLY SICK!



IT WOULD MAKE YOU DEAD, YOU MEAN! THE WAY YOU INTENDED IT TO MAKE ME! YOU MURDERING LITTLE VIXEN!

OH, DON'T! EEEEEEE—



THE STRUGGLE IS BRIEF...

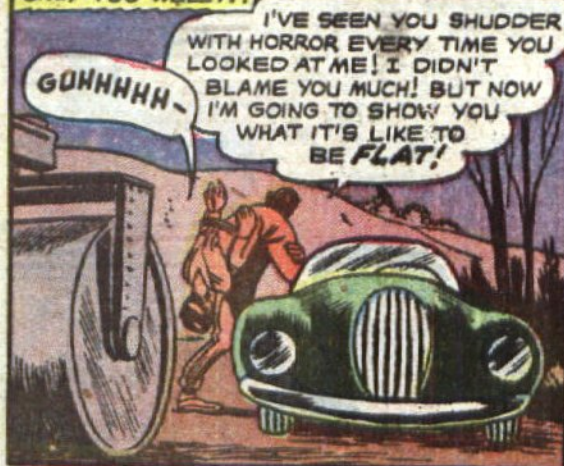
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO GREEDY, NORA! I'VE GIVEN YOU HUGE SUMS OF MONEY! BUT YOU WANTED ME DEAD SO YOU COULD HAVE IT ALL!



I'M NOT A NORMAL MAN, YOU KNOW! I DON'T HAVE NORMAL SCRUPLES! AND I'VE MADE PLANS FOR JUST THIS SORT OF THING! YOU'LL BE VERY SORRY BEFORE I'M THROUGH WITH YOU!

JOURNEY INTO FEAR

THE FLAT MAN DRIVES TO A CERTAIN ROAD STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION, WHICH HE REMEMBERS ONLY TOO WELL...



GOHHHHH-

I'VE SEEN YOU SHUDDER WITH HORROR EVERY TIME YOU LOOKED AT ME! I DIDN'T BLAME YOU MUCH! BUT NOW I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE FLAT!

EEEEKKKK!
NO, FOR THE LOVE OF HEAVEN! Y-YOU CAN'T! NOT THAT!

CAN'T I, THOUGH? JUST WAIT AND SEE, MY LOVE! I'M GOING TO ROLL YOU AS FLAT AS I AM!



IT TAKES BUT A MINUTE TO START THE POWERFUL DIESEL...

TOO BAD THAT THIS WILL PROBABLY KILL YOU! YOU WON'T BE AS LUCKY AS I WAS - IF IT IS LUCKY TO GO THROUGH LIFE LOOKING THE WAY I DO! YOU'RE REALLY GETTING A BREAK!

AAAAAAAAA - PLEASE DON'T...

AAAAHHHHH -



AS THE DREADFUL JUGGERNAUT BEARS DOWN ON THE GIRL, SHE TRIES TO ROLL OFF THE ROAD AND AVOID THE TERRIBLE DEATH! BUT THE FLAT MAN LEAPS FROM THE MOVING ROLLER...

OH, NO, YOU DON'T! I'LL DRAG YOU BACK INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD! THERE'S PLENTY OF TIME!

HAVE MERCY ON ME!

AAAAHHH -



BUT AS HE LEAPS, THE FLAT MAN NUDGES THE THROTTLE WITHOUT NOTICING IT! THE ROLLER SPEEDS UP...

HUH! M-MY LEGS! THE ROLLER HAS GOT ME, TOO!
YAAAAHHHHHHH -

OWWWWW -



AND SO THEY WERE REALLY MARRIED AT LAST! OR DO WE MEAN BURIED! ANYWAY, THEY BECAME AS CLOSE AS TWO PEOPLE CAN GET! THEY BECAME TRULY ONE...



ROLLED INTO THE FINAL EMBRACE, A RED SLUDGE IN THE ROAD, NO ONE CAN EVER PART THEM AGAIN! NOT EVEN THE UNDERTAKER!

The End